



2019 Annual Report

Introduction

The Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board (NGSB) believes strongly in the future of sorghum. We serve as a resource for producer and consumer education; a critical mission in supporting producers and informing the general public. We provide funding for research; integral in encouraging innovation in the sorghum crop. We develop value-added markets; perhaps our most important and impactful purpose. By simultaneously developing these core missions, the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board provides value to sorghum growers statewide, regionally, and across the nation.

A summary of the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board initiatives and activities in 2019 is detailed below.

2019 Leadership Development Initiatives:

1) Internships

- NGSB initiated an unpaid internship program in March 2019.
- The Internship Program welcomed two participants in 2019, Ms. Demi Striglos and Ms. Kristine Dvoracek.
- Tasks assigned to Ms. Striglos and Ms. Dvoracek were designed to augment their programs of study (Business Administration and Communications).
- In return for service, NGSB provided mentorship and professional development opportunities, as well as letters of recommendation commensurate with work quality and timeliness.



NGSB Intern, Ms. Demi Striglos



NGSB Intern, Ms. Kristine Dvoracek

2) Nebraska Ag Youth Institute (NAYI)

- NGSB addressed approximately 200 youth at the 2019 NAYI gathering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in July.
- Topics discussed included sorghum attributes, marketing, and the importance of leadership in agriculture.
- Sorghum cookies were prepared for student's meals prior to the presentation.



Executive Director, Nate Blum, Addresses 2019 NAYI Students

3) Nebraska FFA Convention

- NGSB participated in the Nebraska FFA Convention in April as judges of a science fair and proficiency events.
- NGSB presented awards to winners of the proficiency event at the convention awards ceremony.

4) High School Visits

- As one component of regular outreach, NGSB visited with students in several high schools across the state in 2019. Topics included: Sorghum attributes and agronomy, Ag marketing, leadership in agriculture, and foods science.
- High schools visited included: Trenton, Norfolk, Weeping Water, Kearney



2019 Producer and Consumer Education:

1) Late-Planting Press Release

Blum visits Ag Marketing Students in Kearney, NE

- In March, NGSB released resources to producers via press release in regard to opportunities for replacing corn and soybean crops, delayed in planting due to weather, with sorghum.

2) Producer Education Workshops

- In September, NGSB hosted four producer education workshops in the communities of Nebraska City, Norfolk, McCook, and Kearney. These workshops focused on marketing and harvest support for new and returning sorghum growers.
- The Norfolk event was live-streamed on Facebook, reaching over 200 viewers.

3) The Nebraska Grains Education Collaborative

- In November, NGSB facilitated the first meeting of the “Nebraska Grains Education Collaborative”. The Collaborative is an informal working group consisting of high school FFA programs, Community Colleges, Universities, the Nebraska Department of Education, and grains industry representatives.
- The Collaborative exists to provide a space in which educators across educational levels can work together with industry to optimize education and encourage robust grains curriculum.

*Logo for the NGSB-Facilitated,
Nebraska Grains Education Collaborative*



4) Educational Materials Development

- NGSB developed a consumer education double-sided half-page flyer containing information regarding sorghum's attributes as a culinary product and uses in the kitchen.
- NGSB developed a producer education piece containing planting, harvest, and general agronomic information regarding sorghum as a crop.
- These materials were distributed at the Nebraska State Fair, Husker Harvest Days, various field days, and at other events.



One side of the 2019 Consumer Education Resource

5) 2019 Sorghum Symposium

- NGSB facilitated the 2019 Sorghum Symposium in Grand Island in January 2019.

2019 Support for Research:

1) NGSB provided financial support for the following projects:

- Breeding Kafirin Gene Edited High-Digestibility and Lysine Sorghum with High Nitrogen Efficiency and Large Kernel Traits - Dr. David Holding
- Genetic Improvement of Sorghum for Bioenergy, Feed, and Food Uses – Dr.'s Sattler and Funnell-Harris
- University of Nebraska TAPS Field Day at North Platte, Nebraska – Dr. Burr
- University of Nebraska Extension Field Day at the Stumpf International Wheat Research Center at Grant, Nebraska – Dr. Stepanovic



The NGSB Booth at the University of Nebraska TAPS Field Day



Participants at the University of Nebraska Extension Field Day at Grant Nebraska

2) 2019 Hybrid Plot Day at Trenton, Nebraska

- NGSB participated in the NeSPA Hybrid Plot Day hosted by Mike Baker in Trenton in September.
- The event was attended by approximately 60 people.



2019 Promotion:

1) NGSB designed and published a new website (www.nebraskasorghum.org)

- The new website replaces the long-defunct state website, which contained no content or support.
- The website links to USCP, NSP websites, as well as to NGSB social media platforms and provides news, photos, contact information and other pertinent resources.

2) NGSB proactively participated in multiple media opportunities regularly throughout the year

- Media participation included: Radio (KRVN, KETC), Television (NTV, Pure Nebraska), Print (Midwest Messenger, local newspapers, Nebraska Farmer).

Blum shares an Update from Husker Harvest Days with NTV's Sara Kirkley



3) Nebraska State Fair

- NGSB served cookies and popped sorghum, provided live-cooking demonstrations, and handed out promotional and educational materials to hundreds of fair-goers at the 2019 Nebraska State Fair.



Executive Director Blum Demonstrates Popping Sorghum at the 2019 Nebraska State Fair

4) Husker Harvest Days

- NGSB served cookies and popped sorghum, provided live-cooking demonstrations, and handed out promotional and educational materials to hundreds of attendees of the 2019 Husker Harvest Days farm show.

A Beautiful Sunrise at the 2019 Husker Harvest Days



5) Alliance for the Future of Agriculture (AFAN) Tailgate

- NGSB participated alongside other Nebraska commodity groups in the annual AFAN Tailgate. NGSB prepared and served nearly 500 sorghum pancakes at the event in early October.



Executive Director Blum, and his Wife Kelli, Make Sorghum Pancakes at the 2019 AFAN Farmers and Ranchers Tailgate

6) Partnership with the University of Nebraska Dairy Store

- NGSB collaborated with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Dairy Store to create a gluten-free cookie dough ice cream. The flavor, dubbed “Sorghum Army’s Double Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Invasion”, features chocolate ice cream with dark chocolate chips and sorghum chocolate chip cookie dough.
- The product was unveiled at the University of Nebraska’s 150th Homecoming event in October.



Executive Director Blum poses with UNL Dairy Store Staff

7) The Nebraska LEAD Program

- NGSB sponsored a lunch for the Nebraska LEAD Program Fellows of Class 39. Staff addressed the class during the lunch in September.
- NGSB participates regularly in the Nebraska LEAD Alumni Association in a leadership role.

8) University of Nebraska Lincoln East Campus Library

- The NGSB Board approved support for the remodeling of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln East Campus Library. The university will include NGSB on a donor wall, and provide access to students for the purpose of internships, once the project is complete.

9) Sorghum Saturdays

- NGSB began a semi-regular video series titled, “Sorghum Saturdays”. The videos, featuring cooking demonstrations and interviews, air on Saturdays on the NGSB Youtube channel and are shared across social media platforms.



Executive Director Blum and UNL Dairy Store Staff Unveil the New Ice Cream Flavor at the Universities 150th Homecoming



Executive Director Blum and His Sons, Brendan and Liam Demonstrate How to Make Sorghum Cajun Bowls on a Sorghum Saturday Segment

10) Sorghum Army Campaign

- NGSB developed, and received formal copyright, for the “Sergeant Sorghum” mascot.
- The logo was added to promotional materials such as hats, t-shirts, stickers, rfid wallets, and the NGSB website. Shirts were presented to members of Nebraska’s federal delegation as well as to the governor.
- The hashtag, #sorghumarmy continues to gain traction on social media platforms.
- The campaign, designed to create consumer interest and producer pride, continues to be widely successful in generating a recognizable identity for Nebraska sorghum.



From Left to Right: 1) The Sorghum Army Logo 2) NGSB Chairman Baker and Executive Director Blum Present a Sorghum Army Shirt to Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts 3) NeSPA Board Member, Dean Sombke, NGSB Board Members Mike Baker and Scott Nelson, and Executive Director Blum Present a Sorghum Army Shirt to Congressman Adrian Smith 4) Executive Director Blum Presents a Sorghum Army Shirt to Congressman Don Bacon

Markets Development:

1) In-State Outreach

- In March, NGSB began regular, monthly outreach visits to communities across the state.
- Typical outreach includes visits with industry partners, ethanol plants, producer events, visits to high schools, and local media (radio/print/television).
- Outreach increases NGSB visibility and often results in uncovering markets development opportunities.

2) Relationship Development with the Mexican Consul to Nebraska and Iowa

- NGSB developed and fosters an ongoing relationship with Sra. Guadalupe Sanchez Salazar, Mexican Consul to Nebraska and Iowa, and her staff in Omaha.
- This relationship is important in creating additional markets opportunities in Mexico.
- Sra. Sanchez-Salazar spoke at the 2019 Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association (NeSPA) Hybrid Plot Day in Trenton, Nebraska in September.



Executive Director Blum Poses with Mexican Consul, Sra. Guadalupe Sanchez Salazar at the 2019 Mexican Independence Celebration

3) Trade Mission to Vietnam

- In September, NGSB visited with industry representatives, government officials, and USGC staff in Vietnam in regard to reopening the Vietnamese market to US sorghum importation.
- Nebraska's trade delegation, led by Governor Pete Ricketts, also addressed the need to approve the sorghum phytosanitary protocol with Vietnamese officials, including the Secretary of State, the Minister of MARD, and the Prime Minister of Vietnam.



Left to Right: 1) Executive Director Blum Poses with Vietnamese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bui Son 2) The Nebraska Delegation Meets with Mr. His Excellency, Nguyen Xuan Cuong, Director of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Hanoi

4) Domestic Markets Development

- NGSB has begun meetings with local economic development professionals across the state and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, to develop proposals to attract processing to the state.
- Proposals are to be developed for three communities initially by the end of 2019.
- Prospects will be identified by the end of 2019 and pursued in 2020.

Federal Legislative Efforts:

(Funded with Nebraska State Checkoff Dollars. No National Checkoff Dollars Were Utilized for Federal Advocacy)

1) Nebraska Department of Ag Delegation Visit

- NGSB participated in meetings in Washington D.C. as part of the Nebraska Department of Ag Delegation in June.
- The delegation met with members of the Nebraska federal delegation, Mexican, Canadian, and Vietnamese Embassy staff, USGC staff, and attended the Nebraska Breakfast.
- The delegation encouraged passage of USMCA and discussed trade opportunities.



The Nebraska Delegation Meets with Senator Deb Fischer in Washington



Outside the Eisenhower Executive Office Building Ahead of Meetings with White House Staff

2) Field Visit with Congressman Bacon

- In partnership with the Nebraska Cattlemen, NGSB hosted Congressman Don Bacon for a Field visit and meal at John Dolnicek's residence near Lawrence, Nebraska in August.



Congressman Bacon Receives a Sorghum Update from Past NGSB Board Member, John Dolnicek as Current NGSB Member, Scott Nelson Observes

3) President Donald Trump's Visit to Council Bluffs

- NGSB attended the POTUS' biofuels announcement in Council Bluffs in July.



President Donald Trump Address the Crowd in Council Bluffs, IA



Team Sorghum Poses for a Photo Following the President's Remarks

Administrative Initiatives:

1) Statute Update

- In February, NGSB worked with the Nebraska Legislature to update the state statutes. The organization can now accept the additional funding sources generated by fees, royalties, and grants in addition to checkoff funding.

2) Database

- NGSB has begun to leverage Salesforce for records-keeping and targeted marketing.

3) Producer Engagement

- NGSB sent out a large mailing (3,500 pieces) encouraging producers to provide contact information and email addresses. Respondents from this mailing will be among the first to receive a quarterly newsletter (in development).

An Old GMC Pickup Truck Stands Guard beside the Hybrid Sorghum Plot at the International Wheat Research Center near Grant, NE



Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board Priorities in 2020

1) Domestic Markets Development

- NGSB recognizes the need for processing facilities that are proximate to sorghum production in Nebraska. The lack of sorghum processing in Nebraska severely limits the ability of Nebraska growers to maximize revenues and access value-added markets.
- NGSB has begun, and will continue to, work alongside the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska Public Power, KAAPA Cooperative, and the economic development teams of several Nebraska communities to develop proposals to attract processing facilities to the state.
- NGSB envisions a “sorghum corridor” bisecting the state from McCook to Blair. Targeted markets include: Food-Grade Milling, Pet Food, Aquaculture, Bio-plastics, Poultry Feed, Swine Feed, Cattle Feed, Pet Food, Industrial Uses, and Bio-Energy.

2) International Markets Development

- The need for robust international markets is also important to increasing revenues of sorghum producers.
- NGSB continues to monitor developments in China and Vietnam for signs of fair market access. Once Vietnam announces that they have signed the sorghum phytosanitary agreement, reopening the country to sorghum importation, NGSB is ready to leverage contacts made in that country with end-users.
- Mexico and Canada remain top targets for trade growth. In particular NGSB is interested in creating value-added markets with Mexico, aside from the traditional animal feed markets, and developing a culinary market in Canada.
- Developing markets, such as India, which is culturally adept at the use of sorghum already but is projected to struggle to provide adequate amounts of coarse grain to the population, are of interest to NGSB.
- NGSB, alongside USCP and other sorghum-producing states, will participate in a regional sorghum-bloc at USGC. In doing so, we will support trade teams to Nebraska and search for greater international markets opportunities.

3) Continuation of Statewide Outreach

- NGSB will continue regular outreach across Nebraska. Face-to-Face visits with producers, industry, students, and local media are of great importance in raising the sorghum awareness profile in Nebraska.

4) Continued Support for Educational Initiatives

- NGSB hopes to strengthen the internship initiative in 2020.
- NGSB will continue to work alongside secondary and post-secondary institutions, as well as industry representatives and the Nebraska Department of Education to ensure that robust grains education and agronomy curriculums are available to students in our state.

- NGSB will continue to proactively seek out opportunities to engage consumers and producers through multi-media strategies and the development of educational materials regarding the applications and production of sorghum.
- NGSB will begin creation and distribution of a regular newsletter to current and potential sorghum producers and industry partners

5) Support for Research

- NGSB encourages new and innovative research, preferably with finite goals for publication and marketability, at the University of Nebraska Lincoln and other sorghum-research institutions.

6) Income Stream Diversification

- Statutory updates in 2019 allow for income to be received from grants, fees, and royalties in addition to the traditional checkoff dollars. NGSB will continue to work to leverage grants opportunities, fight for fair royalties from marketed research results which we have funded, and explore other potential income streams to ensure the financial health of the organization.

Conclusion

I'm optimistic about the potential for growth in Nebraska sorghum production and the revenues that can be provided to our producers by developing robust value-added domestic and international markets. It is important that we get this right. Not just for sorghum producers, but for Agriculturalists as a whole. Nebraska needs greater diversification in grains production.

Increased farm revenues across the crop spectrum is key to improving the economic health of rural America...And as goes rural America, so goes the nation. We must support sorghum growers in Nebraska with a holistic approach. This includes working with the organizations whom represent the other commodities grown in those farmer's rotations. Our industry isn't large enough to support parochial protectionism.

Strategies for markets growth, communications, and consumer and producer outreach must be multi-faceted. At times, even "outside the box". Thinking creatively about the development and implementation of these strategies is a fun and rewarding challenge. Leading the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board, is a tremendous privilege. Doing so with such dedicated and knowledgeable board members is an undeserved blessing.

We are the Sorghum Army. Together, there is little that we cannot accomplish. Thank you for a fantastic first year, and for the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,



Nate Blum
Executive Director
Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board

